Development Centre is living upto its objectives;

(b) if so, what are its achievements till date;

(c) whether more such Centres will be opened; and

(d) the details of the capital and recurring expenditure on this Centre?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND SPACE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) and (b) The Rural Extension Centre of the Electronics Research and Development Centre (ER&DC), Thiruvananthapuram has started functioning in rural environment since may, 1995. The objective of the Centre is to provide opportunity for field testing of rural technology packages developed in ER&DC. It also envisages providing computer training to the rural youth and exposure to technology to the rural population. Training on Computer operation and familiarisation with the key board is being conducted for the rural youth. Computer based educational and training programmes for the schools in the rural areas are being developed currently with the participation of teachers of the middle schools in the rural areas.

(c) At present, there is no proposal of setting up more such Centres.

(d) There is no major capital or recurring expenditure of ER&DC. Thiruvnanthapuram involved in this Centre, at present.

Privatisation of Railway Services

*174. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether, with a view to improving efficiency and easing cash crunch, Government propose to take privatisation of new services, including franchising of freight terminals, confining itself to meeting only the primary demand of freight and passenger traffic;

(b) it so, what are the details of the related plans;and

(c) the steps taken and being taken to implement the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SURESH KALAMDI): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. In view of the diminishing budgetary support to Railways, it has been decided to divert certain off-line activities to private sector, which would help foster competition, thereby increasing efficiency, and also ease the resource crunch. Areas identified for private participation include maintenance of telecom facilities, catering services and hotels, maintenance of stations and cloak rooms, franchising of freight terminals, running of tourist trains on identified circuits. The 'Own Your Wagon' Scheme and the 'Build-Own-Lease-Transfer' scheme have already elicited a good response.

Electronic Fish Finder Developed by ER&DC

*175 SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA: DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Electronics Research and Development Centre has developed